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2009: REFLECTIONS ON AN EXTRAORDINARY YEAR IN THE SECOND DISTRICT

By Mark Ridley-Thomas

As we prepare to usher in a new decade, I would like to wish the nearly 2.3 million residents of Los Angeles County's 2nd District a healthy and happy New Year.

Thank you for helping to make my first year on the Board of Supervisors a resounding success. With your help we can build on the momentum our team generated in 2009, which included an agreement with University of California to open a new Martin Luther King, Jr., Hospital and procuring funding to build the Crenshaw to Los Angeles International Airport light rail system.

Together, these projects will generate more than \$2 billion in public investment in our district and over 16,000 jobs.

In February, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority Board -- at my urging -- will consider adopting the most aggressive local hiring program in the agency's history. When adopted, the policy will apply to some \$46 billion of construction activity over the next 30 years. The new policy will ensure that local residents have access to 30 percent of the estimated 7,000 jobs that will be created on average each year.

During my first year in office, the Board of Supervisors also approved \$322 million to provide new operating rooms and expand and modernize the emergency medical department at the Harbor-UCLA Medical Center.

We have also worked to effect change in environmental, public safety, parks and recreation and other policies.

For example, we have been working with residents near the Baldwin Hills Oil Field and the facility's operator to modify health and safety standards adopted before I was elected. We also lobbied the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to begin a comprehensive Eco-System Restoration Plan for the Compton Creek Watershed; financed park and landscaping improvement; and supported collaborative climate change adaptation and mitigation initiatives.

To strengthen public safety, we expanded the "Gifts for Guns" program, in which hundreds of firearms and thousands of rounds of ammunition were voluntarily surrendered to the Sheriff's Department in the Compton and Lennox areas, in return for gifts certificates. This program was replicated countywide.

We also joined with Sheriff Lee Baca and members of the Florence-Firestone community to announce the successful culmination of a three-month process to enforce a court injunction against the Florencia-13 street gang. In an effort to provide a healthy alternative to at-risk youths, we also provided money to keep county pools open beyond the normal summer schedule.

I have also worked with Marian Wright Edelman, the founder of the Children's Defense Fund, to identify prospective providers of an innovative summer literacy-based program called Freedom Schools that are designed to enhance the learning experiences of young learners in the tradition of the civil rights movement.

While there are many needs in our district, we do not have a shortage of human capital. On January 23, I invite you to share your ideas with me at my 18th

annual Empowerment Congress from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at California State University, Dominguez Hills. Together, as an educated, engaged and empowered 2nd District, we are poised to have another great year.

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